

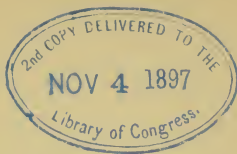
THE CHRIST

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OF GOD

CHARLES H. MANN



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# THE CHRIST OF GOD

## THE RATIONALE OF THE DEITY OF JESUS CHRIST

BY *Charles H. Mann*  
CHARLES H. MANN

"He said unto them, But whom say ye that I am?  
Peter answering said, The Christ of God."

*Luke ix., 20.*

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# THE CHRIST OF GOD

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## I.

### WISER IN THEIR GENERATION

“For the children of this world are in this their generation wiser than the children of light.”—Luke xvi., 8.

I WELL recall how I felt when as a child I first got hold of the idea that the sky was not a solid substance, but was only the appearance which the depths of space presented to the eye; thus, that when looking at it we were not looking at a surface cutting off our view of things beyond, but were gazing into the infinite universe. It was as

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sudden and as ample an enlargement of my mental conception of my environment as a chicken's breaking its shell is an enlargement of its field of life. Equally was this so with the race, when in the history of scientific thought man came into this idea. The shivering of Ptolemy's spheres was the breaking of the shell that cut man off from a knowledge of the boundless creation outside the world in which he found himself.

But a corresponding expansion has not yet come to the doctrines of Christianity. The generally accepted faith of Christendom to-day does not differ essentially from what it was ten centuries ago. The spheres of Ptolemy still hedge the average Christian's ideas of God and of spiritual life. In the realm of natural thought the civilized man of intelligence has burst his shell, but spiritually he is still struggling with the limitations of his natal prison. And this difference between the progress of

man's natural and of his spiritual ways of thinking exists not alone in science; it is to be found in politics and business as well. While our business methods surpass all previous ways of transacting human affairs, in religion we are comparatively at a standstill. We travel by railway naturally, but in a stage-coach spiritually. It is true that there have been great changes in religious thinking; we might call them mighty changes—that the Bible is subjected to new and more penetrating methods of criticism, so that to many it has seemed to be a new book, and has even been called a “new Bible.” But all these newnesses are not essential newnesses; they are not radical as are the ways of our natural thinking; they are not revolutionary as are the ways of modern science; they are all on the same grade of thought. They are related to past spiritual thought as an enlargement, or more perfect adjustment, of Ptolemy's spheres would be to past scientific

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thought. They do not break the encasing walls and let our spiritual thought out into the universe of God, as the Copernican system does our natural thought of God's creation. Man's religion ought to give him as grand conceptions of God as his science gives him of God's works. But, instead of this, man's religion, even the Christian branch of it as commonly received, presents God as inadequately as Ptolemy presented the universe, and with a similar self-centredness. As the latter centred creation at the earth, instead of discovering, as did Copernicus, that it was centred at the sun; so in the prevailing interpretations of Christianity, man and man's interests are represented as the centres about which God and divine things revolve, and even God Himself, according to these teachings, is bounded by human limitations. But all spiritual conceptions ought to be theocentric; that is, God and His purposes should be represented as the cen-

tres from which man, his creation, and his destiny, are determined.

It is true that many deny the doctrines of the Christian faith, believing in nature and in such a God as they can conceive of from nature. Not a few men of scientific ideas have renounced the pent-up conceptions which I have called Ptolemaic, and in their place have preached evolution and its wonders.

But such persons do not enlarge our spiritual thought; they merely substitute for spiritual thought an enlarged natural thought. The God they present, if God he may be called, is a scientific, not a religious conception. What I affirm is that the world has not as yet attained into a *Christianity* commensurate with its science. We want a Christianity which on the one hand shall lift us from the limitations of past ideas on religious themes as effectually as modern astronomy has lifted us out of the spatial ideas of our earthly places,

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and yet which on the other shall be a distinctive and unquestionable Christianity. We want to retain all the devotion, the earnestness of life, the comfort in sorrow, the strength in temptation, the repentance for sin, the seeking after righteousness, the worship and love of God, and the faith in Him and His revelation which have ever pertained to Christianity, at the very moment that we rise in our spiritual conceptions as far above the interpretations of these things which have heretofore prevailed, as to-day's science rises above the interpretations which man gave to nature a thousand years ago. We want a doctrine of God's love which will present it as a thing as grand and as universal as science teaches the power of gravitation to be in nature ; we want ideas of wisdom co-extensive with our ideas of natural law ; and we want such a conception of the divine Father as will enable Him to come inspiringly into our personal lives, yet which, not-

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withstanding that personal nearness, shall be commensurate with our conceptions of the whole kingdom of nature. To that resurrection of spiritual intelligence into a really new world of truth and of doctrine, the Church has not yet attained.

Yet there must be such height and breadth of spiritual thought possible to man. However the "children of this world" may be "in their generation wiser than the children of light," there must be a method and a time when the latter shall come into their birthright, when the at-present mightier ways of the science of nature shall be rivalled by the then equally mighty ways of man's understanding of the life and the teachings of Jesus Christ.

## II.

### ROLLED TOGETHER AS A SCROLL.

“ The heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll.”  
—Isaiah xxxiv., 4 ; Rev. vi., 14.

THE sky is perhaps the most astounding of all the phenomena of nature. Extending above us like a magnificent dome, even in its sensuous appeals to the eye it is the sublimest of all sense-impressions. But grand as is the sky as an object of vision, it is transcendently more grand when we contemplate what it is that looks thus to us, and what are the things which we find in it; that is, when we recognize in the objects of the sky the stupendous creations of nature in them revealed. In fact, man's present interpretation of the phenomena of the



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sky was the step which most effectually revolutionized all his conceptions of natural things. So long as the earth was thought to be the centre of the universe, while the sky and its sun, moon, and stars were regarded as only attendants circling about it, all true progress was impossible. But with the new understanding of the sky a new centre was recognized, and a new science was inaugurated.

The natural sky, however, is not the only sky there is. There is a spiritual sky. By this I mean that there is a phenomenon which sustains the same relation to the objects of our spiritual thought as that which the sky sustains to the objects of our scientific thought. It is the sensuous appearance in which the things of spiritual life show themselves to our earthly vision. The objects it presents to us, like those of the natural sky, are seemingly of small import, but also like those of the natural sky, they will be found of infinite sig-

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nificance when rightly understood. Appearing when superficially observed as a merely natural feature of our earthly life, even as the sky looked to the eyes of our ancestors as though made of a substance like other objects of vision, this spiritual sky will be found, unlike all other similar phenomena, in this also resembling the natural sky, to have its origin in a realm outside the earth. The phenomenon of life which meets this description, we find in the religions of the earth, and in the thoughts, the deeds, and the achievements which have come from them. These are to man's spiritual thought what the sky is to his natural thought. They meet the definition of a spiritual sky because they are at once an external, tangible, and evident thing to the senses, and yet are not necessitated by any circumstance of man's earthly life or condition. All other phenomena of man's life have their origin in some circumstance of his earthly condition. Because man's body

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must be fed, we have an enormous number of workers engaged in a multitude of co-related professions; we have great enterprises undertaken and administered, and mighty engineering constructed and operated. Because man must have clothing and shelter there are numberless laborers employed, and incalculable activity manifested. The bearing and rearing of children, the protection of life and liberty, the obtaining of wealth and luxury—all these necessities of our life on earth, and others too many to enumerate, are the evident causes of human struggle and conflict; of mighty efforts and stupendous achievements, constituting a vast expression of life in the world. But in the phenomena of religion we have expressions of life without the earthly conditions requiring them. We have the struggle, the conflict, the effort, and the achievements; we have the great structures erected, and the incalculable activity manifested, but no answering

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need of food, raiment, shelter, protection, or any other thing calling for all this exhibition of life. The phenomena of religion thus essentially differ from all other phenomena of man's life on earth, even as the phenomena of the sky differ from all other visions of the eye.

This fact, patent to the eye of the thoughtful and unprejudiced observer, has been rarely recognized and, as was the first announcement of a revolving earth, has often been denied ; for in his interpretation of this spiritual sky man to-day makes the same mistake that in the past he made in reference to his understanding of the natural sky. When in reference to this last, man first began to consider what it might be, because he found that every other impression made upon the eye had an answering reality wrought in earthly substances—some of them, such as certain precious stones, the distant sea, etc., actually looking like the sky—he naturally con-

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cluded that the sky itself was likewise made of a substance. It is only in recent centuries that even among the learned the real source of this phenomenon has been known. The cumbersome teachings of Ptolemy have had a longer acceptance among men than the Copernican doctrine, and even to-day if we take all the races of men, there are more persons who do not understand the nature of the sky than there are who do.

Much more does man misinterpret the nature of the spiritual sky. As might have been anticipated, he looks upon the exhibition of the religious impulse in history either as derived from some feature of his natural condition or environment, or as being constituted solely of the outer things; of ritual, form, and observance, and of their sensuous effects, of which it seems to consist. But this is as profound a mistake as men of the past made in reference to the natural sky. It is as impossible

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to satisfy the facts connected with the appearance of the phenomena constituting the spiritual sky by such suppositions, as it would be to construct the natural sky of adamant. As this last is the sense-expression of a kingdom of nature grander than the earth, so is the phenomenon of religion on earth, which is man's spiritual sky, the sensuous expression of a kingdom of life grander than man's earthly experience. The eternal things within are what manifest themselves through these varied outer forms — through words and deeds, through art and science, and through the purposes and ideas which characterize man's external religious life. These last, which are man's spiritual sky, are all that the natural man can see of spiritual things, just as the sky above is all that the eye can see of the extra-terrestrial things of nature. Gathered together in history, they give us a magnificent natural imagery of spiritual things.

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For the Christian, applying this conception of the sky to his special field of thought and experience, the letter of the Scripture constitutes the spiritual sky.<sup>1</sup> Every scriptural character may be regarded as a star in that sky ; and Jesus Christ, the centre about which all the contents of the Scripture revolve, is its Sun. These constituents of our spiritual sky overspread us religiously as the sky does in sensuous appearance ; and when looked upon for what they appear to be in themselves instead of being looked upon for what there is behind them, they shut in our understanding of spiritual things as the spheres of Ptolemy shut in our forefathers' know-

<sup>1</sup> I use the word " sky " here, not as applying to the phenomenal heavens rightly understood, but solely to the sense-appearance of the extra-mundane creation when regarded as something in itself. The scriptural word referring to this surface-seeming of the sky, is " clouds." Hence the prophecy that " the Son of man shall appear in the clouds of heaven," signifies the revelation of the Lord within the letter of the Word.

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ledge of the grander works of nature. Yet for what they appear to be in themselves the expounders of Christian faith have looked upon these things through the ages of the Church's history, thereby hedging in their conceptions of spiritual things to the very restricted field of the external appearance which they have made before their eyes.

Can this spiritual wall of sky—in scriptural language called “the clouds”—which shuts off our view of greater things, be dissipated as has been its natural prototype? May it not be true that as there was a drawing aside of the natural sky, thereby giving man a view of the infinite things of nature, there may in like manner be a drawing aside of the spiritual sky, which shall give us a heretofore unequalled view of the infinite things of God? As a new interpretation gave us true vision as to the one, may there not be a new interpretation which shall give us true vision as



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to the other? If we can understand the phenomena of our spiritual sky in a way to make it infinite as our understanding of the appearances of the natural sky has made that infinite, then shall be accomplished that for which the world is waiting—the construction of a spiritual system which without detracting from its spirituality shall rival the sweep and the grandeur of our science of nature.

It is my faith that the sky-like phenomena of religious life may be removed by the recognition of their real origin. As the natural sky, as a veil to a true knowledge of the universe, disappeared when men saw that what had been taken as a solid substance was only the sense-impression which the infinite domain of nature outside the earth made upon the eye; so our spiritual sky, as a veil to a corresponding knowledge of heavenly things, will disappear when we see that religious phenomena are only the outer forms

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which the divine things within man, infinitely greater than all doctrine, ritual and external organization, assume in his earthly life.

If we seek thus to look upon religion, we must rise entirely above all questions as to the correctness or the erroneousness of the varied doctrines men hold in the many faiths of the world, and recognize all religions as in some sense authenticated by their ministration to man's spiritual need. Man's faith has proved itself such a motive power in his life, and thus such a marvellous factor in the evolution of society, that we are compelled to recognize the fact that religion itself is the effect of the workings of some invisible but mighty power within man, which exhibits itself in this tendency of his to acknowledge some principle or authority outside his life to which he confesses allegiance, and by whose laws or commands he holds himself bound. Religion in its ultimate analysis is, as its name sug-

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gests, simply the binding of man to this marvellous, and, from the natural man's point of view, irrational allegiance. Its essentials are, first, that a man's recognition of any authority over him be not a matter of food, clothing, shelter, or other earthly want, but should be derived from some principle having its basis outside the conditions and interests of his personal earthly life; and, secondly, that it command his actual service. Patriotism in some of its forms has been such a religion with many. Laws of honor, so called, have been the religion of some. Anything that fills this position in a man's life is his religion in fact, whatever be its name; and anything which fails of filling such position in his life, is as a fact not his religion, howsoever by religious title he may designate it.

But the formulated doctrines of any religion, other than in their substantiation of these essentials, and the special forms it assumes among men, are man's

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understanding of this interior and essential religion ; they are only his definition, interpretation, explanation, and application of it. Religion as a phenomenon of life shows its power in a great measure independently of the question of the adequacy of the doctrines its votaries preach. These last have been often sadly deficient, but their inadequacy does not invalidate the stupendous import of religion as a fact of boundless significance. Religious faiths are inmosty not matters of doctrine, but are the ministration to a hunger in man's soul. Seeking a relief for this hunger, and finding the spiritual food which nourishes him, man looks about for reasons with which to explain his state, and these he puts forth as the grounds for the acceptance of his faith. But for the most part they are not. Man believes because his heart is fed and his soul satisfied in believing, while his doctrines are his understanding, his interpretation of the

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satisfaction and spiritual sustenance he gets from his belief. And in like manner with the Church. The wonders it has accomplished for man's spiritual satisfaction are the substantial, the real things of its history. Its doctrines are the ideas of its expounders concerning these things.

This breadth in the recognition of the validity of a religion should not be confounded with the disposition not to distinguish between the qualities of various religions; nor should it be mistaken for an indifference to the importance of true doctrines. Different religions are like different modes of natural life. As any way of living by which man is able to subsist must be accepted as a valid natural life, while between the debased Hottentot and the wealthy and refined European there are indefinite degrees in the quality and desirability of ways of life, so, notwithstanding that there are multitudes of differing and often seemingly conflicting religions, all of

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which are in some degree valid, some are vastly superior in quality to others, and are more to be desired than they.

That erroneousness of doctrine does not necessarily invalidate a religion as a source of spiritual use to man, is well illustrated in the fields of our natural thought. The sun, for instance, is the supreme fact of our experience of day and night. We cannot overestimate the significance of its relation to the earth which is abjectly dependent for life upon its coming and its going. But the theories concerning the sun which men have entertained, have often been inadequate, and are doubtless at this moment inadequate. But so long as a man knows enough to take any advantage of its daily shining, his false doctrines concerning the sun do not destroy its usefulness. In reference to every phenomenon of nature man has held, and still holds, erroneous conceptions, and thus teaches erroneous doctrines. But however right or wrong

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the doctrines, the facts remain with all their meaning and power. We have day and night just as really and just as powerfully whether the theories we hold concerning the sun's coming and going be right or wrong. And so spiritually. We no more do away with the significance of the position which Christianity has held in man's history, and which it holds in his life to-day, by showing how its followers have inadequately understood it, or have held to irrational doctrines, or have even allowed their natural savagery to practice cruelty in its name, than we do away with fire and its inestimable usefulness to man's life on earth because the phlogistic theory concerning it is exploded, or because at times it has been man's enemy. Erroneous religious doctrines no more vitiate the principle or the fact of religion, than erroneous ideas concerning bread destroys its nourishing qualities.

Carefully separating, then, our

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✓ thoughts of religion itself from our thought of religious doctrines, which last are often only the apologies which men have put forth for holding to the first, we find religion presented before us as the most stupendous phenomenon of man's experience. No other one feature of the story of the unfolding of man's life on earth has so strikingly, so persistently, so universally, and so significantly manifested itself as this. In the struggles of the individual life, and in the wars of nations and peoples; in all phases of human experience; in affairs domestic and public; in art, in architecture, in the general thought-life of the race, the influence of religion has surpassed that of every other force in human life.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The flippant treatment which many social philosophers have given the fact of religion in man's history, pooh-poohing it out of the field of serious attention, and accounting for it by the flimsiest and most insufficient hypotheses, causes one unspeakable astonishment. It is a great satisfaction in this connection to meet with the intelligent recognition of



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Gathering before us in thought the drama of religious history and to-day's religious devotion and life, the Scripture and the lives of the people and persons therein recorded, and supremely the life of Jesus Christ as the essential centre of all, embodying in himself the sum and substance of the whole, we may recognize these manifestations on earth as the forms in which are presented to our natural thought the infinite forces of God in the life of man. They all proclaim an unspeakable Presence within, an infinite and otherwise inexpressible divine spirit which through them is exhibiting itself. In putting away the thought that religion as a phenomenon is to be judged by the truth or the falsity of the doctrines of religious faith which men proclaim, and contemplating religion as a stupendous witness of God's presence

religion as a phenomenon of history in Mr. Benjamin Kidd's *Social Evolution*. Published by Macmillan & Co., London and New York.

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within, we are making preparation for removing the clouds from our spiritual sky ; for removing the sky itself as an obstruction to the eye, that we may behold the infinite things of eternal life making themselves known through even these often unworthy appearances.

### III.

## THE ONLY BEGOTTEN SON.

“No man hath seen God at any time ; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.”—John i., 18.

“Who is the image of the invisible God, the first born of every creature.”—Col. i., 15.

AS the sun is the centre of our astronomical system, and as the recognition of the nature and the position of the sun and its relation to the earth at once broke up the sky as a firmament and gave us our modern cosmogony, so Jesus Christ is the centre of our Christian religious system ; and as a next step after the general recognition of religion as a phenomenon evidencing God's presence in the life of man, we must look for the breaking up of our spiritual sky to a new understanding of

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Him and of His life. If we can obtain a really larger conception of Christ—larger, not by learning more perfectly in the old lines of thought who and what He was, but radically and in new lines of interpretation larger; larger beyond basis of comparison,—our purpose will be attained, Christianity will have taken the step corresponding to that which science took some centuries ago.

We prepare to take this step, that is, we lay the foundation for this larger conception, by coming into a just appreciation of what is meant by the chiefest of the assumptions of Jesus Christ for Himself, and the supreme claim of His followers in His behalf, that He is the Son of God. And He is presented to us as the Son of God, not in the general way in which all regenerating persons may become Sons of God,<sup>1</sup> but in a special sense—an “only begotten Son.” This is the supreme, the constantly re-affirmed, and the ever-in-

<sup>1</sup> John i., 12.

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sisted-on title applied to Jesus Christ. Peter's annunciation of his faith in this doctrine, as the account is given in Matthew,<sup>1</sup> led to the Lord's supreme blessing, and to His statement that on that rock He had founded His Church. The first preaching of Paul seems to have consisted wholly in the proclamation of this doctrine.<sup>2</sup> This was the entire confession of faith of the eunuch whom Philip accepted and baptized.<sup>3</sup> Let us not close our eyes to the vastness of this claim. Let us not hesitate to place our grandest conception of what God the Creator and Sustainer of the universe must be, by the side of the vision of the seemingly weak and sorrowful Man given us in Gospel delineation. Familiarity with the doctrine of Christ's "only begotten" Sonship and our acceptance of it from childhood, may dull our appreciation of its startlingness. But let us without shrinking place before

<sup>1</sup> Matthew xvi., 16, 17.

<sup>2</sup> Acts ix., 20.

<sup>3</sup> Acts viii., 37.

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ourselves the contrast between the Man as He is pictured, and this teaching concerning His nature, and ask: What is meant by this surpassing claim? and what is its application to our efforts to see beyond the seeming limitations of our spiritual sky?

Putting aside the unscriptural and inconceivable idea of two equal, divine persons related from eternity as Father and Son, which has been taught in orthodox theology—since our concern is not with extra-human or divine relationships, sustained from eternity, which are necessarily beyond human comprehension—but with this visible Man and God's relation to His parentage, we ask simply: What, as applied to Him, can mean this awe inspiring claim of being the "only begotten" when interpreted in the light of our highest and broadest understanding of the words in which the affirmation is couched? We need an understanding of the subject which will give this doc-

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trine a position in our minds spiritually corresponding to that held naturally by our conceptions of the grander creations of the universe, the suns and worlds about us.

If we critically examine and analyze our methods of understanding natural things, especially the greater natural things, we shall discover a law in the light of which this question of the "only begotten" Sonship can be understood. It is a broad general principle, understood well by him who has examined the subject interiorly, that our only knowledge of all objects is derived, not from grasping the objects themselves, but from an impression which they make upon our sensories. If we take cognizance of a house, nothing from us projects itself around the building and brings the object itself into ourselves; not one particle of the building itself do we take hold of; but there is a something which we call light, and this in a form modified by its contact

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with the building, flows into a receptacle called the eye, and there is begotten from that influx a certain image of the house, an image which may be regarded as an offspring, a child born from the house, and that image declares the nature of the house to us. If we look upon a beautiful scene we may describe it as extending itself out in magnificent proportions before us ; we may speak of valleys and hills and mountains stretching away in the dim distance. What precisely does this mean ? What do we know about all these things of which we speak so confidently ? Only this : That there has been an influx of something from them into us, and that this influx has begotten in us an image. Our language is nothing else than our interpretation of what that image has declared to us.

This is most forcibly illustrated by our interpretation of the phenomena of nature, and thence our knowledge of the great universe about us—an illus-



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tration especially applicable to this subject since we are seeking that very kind of interpretation, and thence that kind of knowledge of spiritual things. No one of us has ever left the surface of this little globe; no one has stretched himself out and taken unto himself a single star; and yet we talk with the supremest confidence of the distance of the stars, their size, and in many cases of their weight. How do we know about these things? Only this: Something has flowed from them into our sensories, and has there begotten images of them, images which might be called their sons; and it is these sons of theirs that have declared to us what we know of them. So completely do we identify these images with the objects from which they are begotten that we use the language of identity always, and with the greatest confidence. We say: There is the sun, that enormous ball of fire. But the only sun we know anything about by direct consciousness, is

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a tiny image of the sun on the retina of the eye ; and all our knowledge of the greatness of the sun itself is our interpretation of the meaning of that image—that is, our knowledge is what that image has declared to us.

This unvarying law, so well understood in reference to our intelligence in matters of natural knowledge, must be just as true in reference to spiritual things. The law under which a knowledge of heavenly truth may be received, that is, the law for receiving spiritual conceptions, must be the same upon its plane as is this law by which the objects of physical sensation are made known to us. Every spiritual conception we are capable of receiving is revealed to us by means of an image of the conception begotten in us which tells us what we know.

This is especially, supremely, and necessarily true of God. If we would know our divine Father, from the very nature of our methods for receiving all

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truth such knowledge must come from an image of God which shall be God's Son, begotten by influx from Him into our life, who shall declare Him. It is far more conceivable that we should be able to stretch ourselves out and incorporate into our being the very universe itself, than that we should be able to take within ourselves directly a knowledge of God. But as it is a divinely arranged provision that on the material plane of life there may be created in our organs of sensation an image of the universe from which we may have a knowledge of it, how could it be otherwise, since the ways of our spiritual intelligence are parallel to those of our natural intelligence, than that this should also be the method on the spiritual plane of life for making known to us spiritual things, especially for revealing God to us; in a word, that there should be begotten in man's capacity for spiritual conception, an image of God which should be called His Son?

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This principle furnishes us with the law for a new interpretation of the life of Jesus Christ, an interpretation which will give us a knowledge of God corresponding to our knowledge of the material universe. We may look upon His life as the image of God, begotten in the life of man during man's spiritual history, and rightly subject to an interpretation which shall demonstrate His seeming limitations to be the limitations of man's capacity for reception, but which shall nevertheless show the infinite attributes of God vividly portrayed in His words, His deeds, and His experiences. In this apprehension of Him the Lord Jesus Christ is the very image of God begotten in the life of the human race during its spiritual history. By a humanity which God assumed from man in the spiritual unfolding of the race, and which in the form of an historical Man, could be brought within the field of human vision ; and by the divinely significant

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life which that Man led on the earth, and still further by the record of that life in the Gospels, an image of God has been begotten and born in human history, and is forever fixed as an eternal Sun in man's spiritual sky, that He might through all time declare God whom no man hath seen. Jesus Christ is a vision of God stamped on the retina of the eye of the race of men by the light of divine truth during the ages of man's spiritual evolution; He is the impress which God has made on man's racial consciousness. No other kind of Son could be born of God to be seen of men, and God can never be seen except through such a Son. Such a Son, indeed, is the universal and only instrumentality by which all things natural, spiritual, and divine are made known to man. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him."

#### IV.

### WITHOUT A PARABLE SPAKE HE NOT

“ All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables ; and without a parable spake he not unto them.”—Matthew xiii., 34 ; Mark iv., 34.

**I**F Jesus Christ be the Son of God, begotten in the spiritual history of man, how may we be sure of that momentous fact ? What is the evidence of His divine parentage, and in what language does He declare to the world His mission ?

No outer testification as to the parentage and mission of Jesus Christ will serve our purpose. The evidence of His sonship must be interior to all documentary proofs ; it must be stronger than all the words men can utter. The claim that He is the only begotten is too tremendous to rest upon such

grounds. The conception which for so many ages dominated the Church that the miracles were an abundant witness of His mission, and which led to the putting forth of so many tomes on "Evidences" to demonstrate from historical laws of proof that Jesus Christ really did live, and especially that He really did the wonderful things recorded of Him, no longer obtains among men. That kind of evidence will never again serve the purpose to which in mediæval practice it was put. Even if the fact of the miracles be admitted, they do not prove that He who did them is the Son of God, nor even that His utterances are true. But more than this, the very idea of miracles under the ancient definition that they are suspensions of law, shocks the fundamental thought of the modern man as to the eternity of the universe and even of God Himself.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I would remind the reader that nowhere is it claimed in the New Testament that the miracles

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In saying, however, that no outer testification would serve our purpose, I do not overlook a kind of external evidence that has, even to the modern thinker, a force in respect to a faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and that is, the evidence to be gotten from the influence which that faith has shown in history. What the faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God has been and what it has done in the lives of men, has a vast significance. However like that of a mere man the life of Jesus Christ may appear when considered by itself, when observed from its relation to the history of the race, it grandly looms up over the lives of all other spiritual leaders. Critics of the life of Jesus have often treated it as though it were for the first time made known, and were amenable to the same rules

were a suspension of law. Regarded as manifestations of higher laws, or of laws whose operation has never before been observed, there is no inherent objection to them.



of judgment as such a life would be if just presented to the world. But the life of Jesus as we have it to-day is not a theory or an experiment. It has been tested through the ages, and must be considered by the side of the history of its influence in the world ; rather, that history is a part of the life itself, and it is when looked upon from this point of view that it is seen in all its grand proportions. When we contemplate the mighty religious drama, or series of dramas, for there are a number, enacted in the name of Christ during the last eighteen centuries, words fail to express the inadequacy of the external story of His life alone and, from any merely natural interpretation of it, to account for its effect ! The people among whom He appeared was one of the most obscure upon the earth. Politically His nation was insignificant. His own life is unknown in secular history. The circumstances related of Him are seemingly limited in import, being of a per-

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sonal rather than of a public nature. The doctrines He taught and the example He set make no appeal to the natural ambitions of men. Yet the religion which was founded on that life—the entire and only records of which can be read through in a few hours—has brought spiritual satisfaction and peace to countless multitudes of every diversity of disposition among men. It has held its position as the most enlightened of the world's religions through eighteen centuries, and it is today the most luminous and vital spiritual influence in the life of man. What is the meaning of this stupendous power in the life of Christ—a power transcending in marvellousness all the wonders related of Him? No miracle of His begins to be so amazing.

Among matters of sense-observation, when an object may be looked upon at the same moment from widely separated points of view, it means that what appears to our sight as small, is in real-

ity very great. It shows us that the object is more extensive than it looks. It enlarges the thing over the appearance. And this is what the widely extended influence of a spiritual phenomenon tells us of its nature. It means that the spiritual import of what we see is greater than in its outer aspect it seems. As applied to the life of Jesus Christ, this means that there must be a spiritual significance within that life commensurate with this vast influence.

But however great the significance which the influence that His life as shown in history reveals, it is not sufficient by itself to lead one to accept Jesus Christ as the manifestation of God on earth ; it can only lead us to be affirmatively disposed towards the acceptance of a doctrine which has exhibited such mighty effects in the world as has this.

The satisfactory proof of the only begotten sonship of Jesus Christ can consist in nothing less than in actually

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finding in Him the revelation of God and the salvation of man.

But how shall we look for God in Christ? By what language does He declare Him? Right here is the crucial question. By what language does Christ reveal God, and therefore for what kind of declaration shall we look?

The language in which Jesus Christ as the Son of God declares to the world His divine Father, must be in the first place a universal language, and in the second place its message must be to man's soul. "God is a Spirit." All revelation of God must be to man's spirit.<sup>1</sup> There is but one language which meets these two essential requirements, and that is the language of

<sup>1</sup> Science, from the very nature of its field of operation, which is to observe, collect, and classify facts, and organize the knowledge thence derived, can never be the source of a direct revelation of spiritual truth to man. What science gathers religion may make use of, but science can never itself enter into the field of religious thought. It forever belongs exclusively to the plane of natural conceptions.

the parable. The parable is the universal tongue which is addressed to every possible human being, and has been used in all ages for the expression of what is spiritual. Being both natural and spiritual, it joins the two. It is natural because addressed to the senses; and it is at the same time spiritual because its meaning is addressed to the soul. In interpreting the phenomena of spiritual things, the laws of the parable are what the laws of perspective are in interpreting the phenomena of nature. As under the last we know that trifling features in the appearance of distant objects of sense signify great natural answering realities—such as enormous spaces, vast dimensions, mighty masses; so in the natural images of spiritual things, their varied features, whatever their seeming natural import, may possess an infinitude of spiritual significance—such as heavenly love, divine wisdom, infinite power. As applied to the life of Jesus Christ this

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means that by spiritual interpretation, and by that alone, can we behold Him as a declaration of God addressed to man's soul. To the symbolic interpretation of His life must we look to find the complete realization of our effort to discover in Him the greatness of God. Such interpretation is able to infinitize His life. Under that may His appearance of personal limitation be made to disappear. Thus understood, the individual deeds of Jesus Christ are individual only to him who receives their benefits. To all others they are expressions of divine truths, universal in their application, but capable of becoming individual with anyone who takes them into his life. When Jesus gave sight to blind Bartimeus, however personally important this act may have been to Bartimeus himself, He did what as a mere fact is of little moment to the world with its countless thousands of blind folk who are never healed. Taking the story in its mere appearance, we learn

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that a certain poor blind man through the power of Jesus Christ received his sight a couple of thousand years or so ago. What then? In its mere external fact, little then. Medical practice has seemingly as wonderful instances of triumph. But interpreting the story under the law of the parable, we find within and above a truth exceeding all limitations as to personality of application. We see in it in such case not a mere tale of a local and temporal event in the Palestine of long ago, but a revelation of an attribute of our divine Father. This is the form which the all-illuminating wisdom of God takes to make known to us that from Him flows a healing power for the cure of everyone groping in the darkness of ignorance and error, that is, in spiritual blindness. This is a truth belonging to every person everywhere and in all ages who is conscious of his inability to see the truth, which is the light of heaven, but who longs for it and applies to God as revealed in

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Jesus Christ for relief—for every such a one is a Bartimeus—to him is this story addressed and of him does it speak.

Parabolic interpretation, too, lifts our understanding of what we read of Jesus Christ above all the limitations of time. We cease to think of Him merely as THEN, and behold Him also in the only way in which it is proper to think of God, and that is as NOW. If Jesus Christ be God, whatever the form in which He appeared before the eyes of men at the time when they beheld Him in outer image, the meaning of that form must be above all time. All the events of the life of Jesus Christ, if we interpret the story from this new conception of Him, represents God's relation to His people at every moment of their history.

Again, this interpretation of the story of Jesus Christ lifts Him out of our conceptions of space as well as out of those of time. We cease to think of Him as especially THERE, and behold Him in



the only way in which it is proper to think of God, and that is as HERE, and as everywhere. His life and acts cease to be limited to Palestine. It is here and everywhere that all things related of Him may take place.

And still further parabolic interpretation lifts Him above all the vicissitudes of change. The variations to which He appears subject convey special conceptions of the divine attributes and accomplish some special degree of accommodation to the weakness of man, but do not represent a changeability in God. From all these limitations the life of Jesus Christ is set free if we only interpret it under the laws of the parable.

But a strange misapprehension and thence a deep-rooted prejudice obtains among men concerning the use of symbolism. To many it seems to make visionary and shadowy the thing to which it is applied. Though it is admitted by all that the soul is of infinitely more importance than the body ; that

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to save the soul was the very act of redemption—the coming of God to man, the only thing for the sake of which the whole drama was enacted ; and though the symbolic interpretation of the life of Christ shows that His relation is supremely to the soul and its interests, yet symbolism ever remains in the minds of such persons as among the unreal things of life, the imaginary and empty fantasies of the mind.

But all this arises from a misapprehension. True symbolism is not the relation of a shadowy mental conception to a substance called a symbol. It should not for a moment be thought of as a merely figurative signification given to that which is in itself real, as a sort of artificial addition, an imaginary attachment to it. Rather, symbolism is the recognition of the attributes of natural objects as derived from the impress of a life which transcends the bodily senses—as stamps made upon the grosser and less real things of the

body by the finer and more real things of the soul. As applied to the life of Jesus, such an interpretation is the recognition of Him and His life as an exhibition of God in the life of man, an exhibition to be symbolically interpreted simply because the symbol is the universal and the only form in which spiritual things can be made to appear before the eye. Careful distinction should be made between symbolism adopted by man as an instrument for the illustration of an idea, and symbolism as expressing the relation between God and His impress upon the world. To make a symbolic use of an object or of an event as a matter of convenience of language is a wholly different thing from recognizing the divine principle that God's truth in man's life reveals itself in symbolic form. The one is like the picture which an artist makes of an ideal landscape, and the other is like the impress which a veritable landscape itself makes upon the screen of a camera

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obscura. In the former case the picture is the reality—it exists in material substances, being constituted of canvas and of colored pigments; while the landscape is an appearance only, it is a sense-suggestion which is made to the eye of him who looks upon the picture from a certain point of view and in a certain light. The landscape in such case is only the conception of a landscape, derived from the work of art, and thus given a *quasi* reality. But in the latter case the landscape is the reality. It exists in earth and air and cloud and water; while it is the picture that is the shadow, that has only the *quasi* reality. It is thus when we give a symbolic interpretation to revelation; spiritual truth is then the reality, it is a divine force making an impress upon man, while the symbol is only the form of the impress which the truth has made.

This is illustrated, too, by many of our own familiar laws in accordance with which our souls express themselves

through our bodies. When a passion enters a man's soul it may express itself in his face and actions. These expressions, whether they be smiles or tears, the contortions of the face, or the positions and actions of the body, must be symbolically interpreted in order to be rightly understood. The smiles must not be looked upon as consisting of certain muscular contractions, but as representing certain affectional states; the tears, not as consisting of certain physical activities and convulsions, but as the expressions of mental emotions. And every other special physical action must be interpreted as meaning some corresponding attribute or condition of the spirit. But in all these interpretations, the expressions of the face and the postures of the body are only the forms the passion assumes. Passion is the reality of man's experience in such case; the actions of the body, flesh and blood though it be, are only the shadow.

In giving a symbolic interpretation

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to the life of Jesus Christ, the Galilæan should not be looked upon as a man who so lived that we can get an illustration of certain spiritual ideas, even a conception of divine things from His life ; rather the divine things imaged in Him are God, who in descending into the spiritual life of man and revealing Himself in history took upon Himself the form of Jesus Christ. The substance of Jesus Christ is not the Man of Sorrows whose form we look upon ; rather that form is as a vision whose answering reality, whose substance is God. The Gospel tales may be regarded as sense-impressions revealing to the consciousness of the race the incarnation of God in the life of man.

To many the symbolic interpretation of the life of Jesus Christ seems to destroy the reality of the man. They miss the delight of that natural and personal conception of Him which has in the past been such a comfort. They hunger for the historical person with

whom they have loved to dwell in imagination as they have pictured Him in His walks and His discourses in the Holy Land.

But why should the destruction of this natural conception follow? What we know is that we have in the New Testament story a surpassing conception of God given in the form of a marvellous drama to be interpreted under the laws of the parable. What history has taught us is that that conception, though often received with infinite distortions, has for eighteen centuries and more been the most stupendous of all spiritual powers on earth. In these so mighty, so elevating, so certain, and so complementary truths we may well rest in spiritual content.

But if one would ask further how under spiritual interpretation he is to think of the natural and historical life of Jesus Christ, I reply that I do not see that the interpretation of His life as an expression of the attributes of God, given

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in the terms of parable, need eliminate His earthly life, or destroy His body of flesh. God works by means, not by magic. In the life of Jesus Christ He has revealed Himself; that we know. More than this, we know that His incarnation in a divinely representative life on earth is as rigidly under the laws of order as is the commonest phenomenon of our earthly experience. By orderly means, natural, spiritual, and divine, the Original of this story has appeared before the eyes of man. And since under the laws of order He has appeared, why should we hesitate to think of Him in a natural form, in flesh and blood? What do we know of flesh and blood, and what of matter, that we can predicate what can or what cannot be wrought out of its substances? Let us emphasize our ignorance. No one knows what matter is. The greater number of the properties we assign to it are the unprovable inferences we have drawn from the impressions it



has made upon our senses; and the very most significant of its innumerable properties is its infinite variation of form according to its elemental composition, and according to the living forces by which it is moulded. What new, and at present inconceivable, properties matter may exhibit when formed in some as yet undiscovered chemical combination, or when wrought by the power of some as yet unknown life force, who can tell? How especially can we know what would be the natural possibilities of an earthly life, or what the properties of a flesh wrought by the infinite life forces of God incarnating Himself in man?

To the eye of spiritual rationality, however, the question of the Lord's natural life, and the external and historical interpretation we should give to it, is subordinate to the question of the spiritual meaning which is contained in this New Testament story as it is addressed to us to-day. The message it

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brings is of vital concern to us at this moment, while the question of the nature and the quality of its historic fact is secondary. If the story of Jesus gives us a vision of God, how transcendently important that we have the spiritual advantage of it ! What are the natural laws in accordance with which this Man has appeared, and the record of His sayings and doings has been written, are for subsequent study. The spiritual meaning of the life of Jesus Christ, like the meaning of a book, is the source of its whole import ; while our natural thought of this historic story, like the question of the personality of the author of a book, or of the mechanics of its manufacture, is a deeply interesting, but not the essential, question.

Nor do these two questions interfere with each other. Our belief in the symbolic interpretation of the life of Jesus Christ need not disturb our belief in whatever natural interpretation

should prove true ; nor need our belief in any natural interpretation of the New Testament story, which may prove true, disturb our faith in the spiritual significance of that divine life on earth. Whether Jesus should be looked upon as a material, flesh-and-blood, historical man, as He has been regarded in the Church ; or as a representative vision of God seen in the spiritual world by the opening of the spiritual senses of the writers of the New Testament, and reported by them as though seen in this world ; or whether the story should be received as a parable of God and of His relation to man, dictated from heaven to the New Testament writers ; or whether the life of Jesus Christ as a historical phenomenon should be explained in some other way, the spiritual meaning is of supreme import, and is undisturbed by any conclusions we may arrive at concerning the natural reality of the facts of this divine history.

The whole purpose of the coming of

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the "only begotten Son" was to declare God and bring salvation to the world. It follows, therefore, that with each person the interpretation of the life of Jesus Christ which gives him the most living, the most forcible, and the most saving conception of God ; which most powerfully makes God a realized presence in his soul for good ; which most efficiently leads the man to shun his evils as sins, to triumph in temptation, and through looking to Him to actualize in his own life the charity which Christ enjoins, and which thus practically makes Jesus Christ to be 'Emmanuel,' "God with us," is for him the true interpretation, even when accompanied with misconceptions of the earthly life of Jesus. For the conception of Jesus Christ whose truth is shown by its bringing the love and wisdom of God into the life of man, is true by a higher kind of truth than is the conception which is true from its agreement with the facts of history. A misconception

of the facts is not so hurtful as is a misconception of the truths they embody. And this, were the facts unquestioned. But some know not what to think of the literal story as such. For all such this principle of the non-essentialness of any special natural conception of the life of Jesus, obtains.

Turning from the apparent objections which may be raised against the spiritual interpretation of the life of Jesus Christ to its advantages, we may in such an understanding of Him behold Him as veritably our God. Thus interpreted, He at once assumes divine proportions. Not more radically does our understanding of a star which we had regarded as a lamp burst its limitations when we discover that it is a sun, than does this simple life expand into infinitude before our eyes when we in this way see God in every act and word of Jesus Christ. Time ceases to limit the story. The Gospel is telling of God in the hearts of men at this in-

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stant. Space is annihilated, for it is God everywhere who is described in this carpenter's life. Personalism is done away with, for it is Christ in the life of you, of me, and of every one that the revelation treats. Thus interpreted our spiritual sky is drawn aside, and the infinite things of God are seen in the place of what seemed to be but an impenetrable veil before our spiritual vision.

But does the life of Jesus Christ bear this interpretation? When we read of Him and of all that He did and said, do we find a spiritual meaning in His history? Does the symbolic method practically apply to Him? If so, how can the various seemingly undivine relationships which He has sustained to man on earth be accepted as visions of the Son of God? How shall we understand the humiliating features of His life? How can such things as His prayer to God be understood in one who under the interpretation of the parable is the very manifestation of God Himself? And is He

not our Saviour? What is redemption under symbolic interpretation? And how can He reveal the glory of God from His non-glorious life? In a word, as thus interpreted, what shall be our understanding of the limitations of Jesus Christ and of the salvation He wrought, and where is the glory He brought forth to view?

I am well aware that the doctrine that the life of Jesus Christ, if we look for God in Him, will actually be found to be a Parable of God is thus far an assumption. Whether the story actually responds to such an interpretation can only be demonstrated by making the examination; and he who seeks God revealed in the symbolic interpretation of the life of Christ will surely find Him there to his own boundless spiritual comfort. He will find in the transcendent love which Jesus exhibits a surpassing image in human form of the love of God. The divine Father is to be thought of as moved in His own infin-

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ite degree by a love whose tenderness and unselfishness are finited to our comprehension in the love of Jesus Christ. The wisdom of those incomparable discourses, to obey which leads man to the supreme heights of spiritual living, can be received as a limited, a veritable man-shaped and man-sized picture of the wisdom of God. And in the deeds of mercy of Jesus Christ, in His acts of healing the sick, cleansing the lepers, feeding the hungry, freeing those possessed by evil spirits, and calming the sea, we have visions revealing to us in comprehensible adaptations to our understanding, the attributes of the power of God, which is ever in like manner operating in the life of man to redeem him from his spiritual evils. Every event in the life of Jesus Christ thus interpreted will bring to light the working of God in man's own life, and through that illumination he will find God, not afar off, but close by, even at the centre of his own being.



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The detailed treatment of that divine history is beyond the scope of my present work. I will content myself with presenting further only some of the general principles which everyone should observe as through the symbol he is seeking God in Jesus Christ.

## V.

### DESPISED AND REJECTED

“ When we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.”—Isaiah liii., 2.

THE natural man finds his every anticipation as to what a revelation from God should be, violated by the doctrine that Jesus Christ is He. Is not God omnipotent? he asks. But where is the omnipotence of this Man? Is not God the King of kings? But where is the royalty of Jesus Christ?

But in the spiritual apprehension of the subject certain laws of tremendous import, generally unknown or ignored, make the image in which God appears before the eyes of men the reverse of all natural anticipation.

As a first principle, it should never be

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forgotten that the worldly greatness or insignificance of Him who claims to be the Son of God has in itself no weight whatever in determining whether that claim be true, thus whether He be adapted to bring a worthy conception of God and thence God Himself to the thought, the life, and the affections of man. As in a work of art the size of the work does not determine its artistic value, but the quality of the artist's conception and the perfection with which it is made visible, so the external greatness of God's Son has no bearing on the question as to whether or not He is in very truth His Son.

Like every other spiritual principle this is illustrated by a corresponding natural law. In revealing itself to man the whole realm of nature is limited to a circle of about three quarters of an inch in diameter at the back of his eye, within whose tiny boundaries must be displayed all its beauty and its grandeur. Yet small as this space is, under the

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law for the interpretation of sense-impressions, it is ample. Equally does this law apply in the revelation of spiritual things. The image in man through which God is presented is necessarily as limited as man is limited. But this limitation has no significance whatever as indicating a similar limitation in God whose Son is in this way presented to us. Interpretation can give infinite proportions to what is revealed in the very tiniest image. Going out-of-doors on a clear evening we see above our heads what appear to be little dots of fire—appearances often less striking than the street lamps near by. But these insignificant-looking sparks are the images in which the infinitudes of God's universe are revealed to us. Those infinitesimal-appearing things are suns and worlds. Interpretation has taught us what they are. But what interpretation has done for the phenomena of nature, it can do for the phenomena of religion as well.

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However limited may appear this only begotten Son of God, Jesus Christ, that seeming limitation is only from the limitation of man's capacity to reproduce an image of God. Interpretation can give divine proportions to that life naturally so restricted, the extent of which will be limited only by our capacity for understanding God.

To many it seems as if we had in the scenery of nature the most effective imagery in which to clothe a revelation of God. But while the things of nature do represent to men ideas of certain divine attributes, as a representation of God in any full and complete sense, especially in His relation to man, they are wholly inadequate. We could hardly delude ourselves with a greater fallacy than to assign to the scenery of nature so pre-eminent a function. The majesty of the mountains and the impressiveness of the ocean—while conveying to the beholder a conception of divine power and a corresponding sense

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of his own littleness, and some other ideas of God—lack this first essential of that which would represent God in a plenary way, inherent quality; for their power to represent God is derived from the resultant effect of their combination of parts, and not from the interior quality of their constitution. A mountain is only an accumulation of pebbles, or a massing of rocks and earth, which when considered in detail, or in small quantities, suggest nothing more divine than what pertains to every commonest object of sense. In fact the impressiveness of the mountain is only the effect of its image begotten in the eye, and represents nothing whatever really pertaining to the mountain. This is to be considered as a mere dead thing which, if it gives us a conception of God at all, does so because arousing in us a sentiment which has its origin in our own hearts. A rose-bush because it is on a higher plane of creative expression, represents the life of God more truly

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than do the very Himalaya Mountains, and a man as an expression of God is greater than all the mountains of the earth.

Instead of great dead things, or things, however big, of low organic structure being best adapted to give man a conception of God, He must be represented by that which from its inherent quality and in its veriest detail expresses Him. An adequate representation of God must express divinity to its finger-tips, so that a single particle of it will show His attributes. Such an expression can be given in a way to reach us efficiently only in the highest terms of creative manifestation. As we look out into the world we find creation exhibited in grades. Lowest is the mineral, above that is the vegetable, then the animal, and high above the animal is man. God is infinitely above all. Where should we look logically for an adequate expression of Him other than in the highest of His creations, in

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man? God cannot be most efficiently expressed in minerals however great be their masses, since minerals are the very lowest things of nature ; nor in the vegetable, which is the very humblest expression of an appearance of life ; nor yet in the mere animal, which possesses no moral life, and is inferior to man. If God would reveal himself to us as a Being above us, He must construct the form in which He would make Himself known out of the very highest and the best of the things which He has made, and the very height of all that He has made, which has come within the field of our vision, is character. This is the surpassing pearl compared with which all other things sink into insignificance. Mountains and oceans, the forests and all the glories of vegetation, and all other works of nature, are relatively as nothing when compared with the glory and the honor which pertain to heavenly character, the inestimable possible possession of a man. If God would with



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the greatest efficiency present Himself before our eyes, in the terms of human character He has the supreme language for His purpose. It is true that before God appeared as a man the insignia of nature were made to serve His purpose, and in the thunders of Sinai He made himself known to the Jews. But this was only a suggestion of His power ; it was not a manifestation of Himself ; it could not draw man's heart to Him. God is after man's heart. Nothing less than the very best love we can be induced to give Him will satisfy Him, and this love is not called forth by any less an exhibition of God than that displayed in a man—in Jesus Christ.

Some have supposed that even if represented by a man, that man must be free from every even seeming weakness, wholly above being affected by the machinations of wicked men, and with a nature infinitely self-contained, in order to represent God.

But if one would rightly interpret

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the life of Jesus Christ in the light of the doctrine that He is the "only begotten Son," he must never forget that the Son of God, in the form in which He can appear before the eyes of man, cannot represent God as He is in Himself. As He is in Himself God transcends every possible apprehension of man. "No man hath seen God at any time." God as He is in Himself was never a babe, nor a boy twelve years of age, nor a man of sorrows. It is God as He is in man's life that is represented by these degrees in the growth of Jesus Christ. It is the hold that we have given God in our hearts that is the subject of temptation, of sorrow, that is persecuted, suffers, is crucified and rises from the dead, and redeems us from our sins. No true judgment concerning the divine nature of Jesus Christ, nor any satisfactory law for the interpretation of His life as the "only begotten Son" of God, is possible except in the light of this principle de-

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fining the meaning of the doctrine that Jesus Christ is God.

The image in which God reveals himself to man's eyes must be according to the position which He actually occupies in man's heart. Such image, therefore, is necessarily the representation of the glory or the shame of the place man has given the attributes of God in his life. If man should make divine love his king, that is, should make the laws of divine love the laws of his conduct among men, doubtless God in appearing to him in such case would assume the form of outer royalty. But when man places self-love first, and the love of God last, thus holding divine things in contempt, and making all that is spiritual in himself weak and miserable until it cries in distress for help, then must the Son of God, that "image of the invisible God" begotten in human history to reveal God, in Scripture language "to declare Him," in like manner appear in obscurity and con-

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tempt. For if before the eyes of such a man the Son presented himself as outwardly powerful and prosperous, He would represent God as possessing the passions and selfishness which power and prosperity in such a state of man's life would signify. Therefore according as man is spiritually distorted, correspondingly distorted must appear the image of God before his eyes.

At the time of the advent of God into the life of man in the person of Jesus Christ, the world was at its furthest distance from the divine Father. All spiritual conceptions were as things despised. A divine entrance into such a state of degradation could show itself only in a form humble, a form not such as the natural man could desire. The poverty, the sorrow, the obscurity, and the weakness of the outer life of the Son of God were from the debased spiritual conditions of mankind at that time. Yet that is necessarily the very time in man's history in which the Lord

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can appear in external imagery. Only to a people in which religion had become so externalized that it consisted wholly in mere acts of the body could God reveal himself in bodily form. Since He could not appeal to their spiritual perceptions, He appealed to their bodily senses. When there are no children to respond, the very stones cry out. Presenting himself to the Jews, the Son must represent God according to the position which had actually been given the attributes of God by that people; but since every man, in every age of the world, at the beginning of his regeneration, is spiritually like the Jews, Christ by this same presentation represents God for every individual as well. But the power of Christ in removing infirmities, and the glory of His promises to His disciples, represent the redeeming power of His truth when received into the life, and the position He should hold in the lives of those who receive Him within.

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In His life on earth Jesus Christ passed through many variations of state between the manger, the cross, and the resurrection. These represent varying states in man's reception of God. God in man's life is at one time as a babe, or a young child ; at another He is Christ tempted and suffering, wrestling with doubt, and with the attacks of man's own self-love ; again He is Christ healing from sickness, and still again God in man is Christ rising from the tomb.

A man is apt to be consciously most moved by the contemplation of that stage of the life of Christ which most nearly represents the stage of God's progress in his own heart. The tremendous emphasis which has been placed on the crucifixion instead of on other and equally significant events of the life of Christ, would appear to indicate a state of the Church in which God,—that is, man's consciousness of God,—was being crucified. The Church of Rome seems to illustrate this princi-

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ple in its worship of the infant Jesus and of the Madonna. As the Mother represents the Church, is it not more than a coincidence that the Babe and the Mother should be especially worshipped in that division of the Church which is most strikingly characterized by an infantile conception of God, and in which the Church is so glorified? A like principle seems to have influenced the artists of the Renaissance, who so often picture Christ in His sufferings. Was not God's hold on the hearts of the men of that artistic but profligate age rightly represented by a man in terrible distress?

But as the apprehension of God by man will grow in the coming states of the Church, the more glorious aspects of the life of Jesus Christ will come to be known as never before. In the coming Church, Christ as described by John in the Apocalypse will be the representative of the conception of God which man will behold in worship: "In the

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midst of the seven golden candlesticks was one like unto the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace, and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength."

Guided by these principles we may banish from our thoughts every idea that there is any lack in the life of Jesus Christ that will make Him less than the "only begotten" Son of God, and thus as the "image of the invisible God," and thence as God. As the image of a love and a wisdom that are divine, and of a quality inherent in Himself, as exhibiting an infinitely surpassing divine and human character,



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magnificently lovely and grand, and forever above us, Jesus Christ meets every requirement for being the Son of God in the very supremest form man is capable of receiving in his organs of vision.

## VI.

### HE SHALL SAVE HIS PEOPLE

“Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins.” Matthew i., 21.

IN the history of the marvellous power which the life of Jesus Christ has exerted in the spiritual evolution of man, no service of His to men has more wonderfully moved them than that of Saviour, and to none have they more persistently clung. The word “Saviour” expresses that divine attribute which brings Him closest to us, and reveals the supreme purpose of His coming. And yet the misunderstanding of no feature of the life of Jesus Christ has been more destructive of the larger understanding of Him and of His truth

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than has the interpretation which the Church has given His saviourhood.

It could not be otherwise than that a governmental scheme of salvation should have been read into the Bible during that period in the history of the Church when God was universally conceived of as being like an absolute earthly monarch. For nearly a thousand years it was the orthodox doctrine that Jesus Christ was a sacrifice to the devil. Then came an interpretation of salvation which has lasted among the conservative bodies of the Church to the present time. According to this, Jesus became the Saviour of man by suffering in his stead the penalty of a violated law; divine law was of the nature of a legal enactment, being promulgated as the edict of God; sin is its violation; punishment the prescribed penalty of the law; forgiveness the remission of its penalty to culprits condemned under it, and redemption is the sacrifice to meet the requirements of

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the broken law without punishing the guilty ones, and thus to enable God to remit the penalty of its violation without ignoring His own dignity and the dignity of the law. The whole idea is legal and technical, and thus an affair of the courts; Jesus is a legal advocate and a proposed vicarial substitute, and God the Father is the Judge. Such an interpretation of the mission of Jesus Christ as man's Saviour, makes the disruption of our spiritual sky as a firmament impossible. It is too man-centered, too limited and local, too Ptolemaic.

It is true that many individual Christians and some denominations do not hold to this interpretation. Various theories as to salvation's being wrought through Christ's example, and as to whether or not He be in any special sense the Son of God, or only a good man whose remarkable life and teachings have influenced men for their good, have been put forth and have found ad-

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herents. But all such theories, while escaping the irrationality and the cruelty of the early conceptions of redemption, lack their virility, and fail to meet the intenser hunger of man for a Saviour who shall be a Saviour indeed.

In the place of such teachings as these we surely need a new interpretation of Jesus Christ as our Saviour. The doctrine of salvation should give us a conception of God as our Saviour commensurate with our conception of God as the Creator. Where can such a doctrine be found? On every page of the Scripture when we give what is said of the redemption which Jesus accomplished the same spirituality and universality of interpretation as that which enables us to see God in Jesus Christ. We must understand Jesus Christ as Saviour in the same way as we understand Him as a revelation of God.

Turning with this thought to the Scripture, we find that both in the Old Testament prophecies concerning the

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Messiah, and in the New Testament stories of Jesus, He is presented as man's Saviour, and His work as Redeemer is described. Both tell of a crisis in the spiritual state of man, and of God the Redeemer as a mighty Combatant overcoming for man's salvation. Picture after picture of God as in this way man's Redeemer is presented to us throughout the Old Testament. He is called a "man of war," and in Isaiah a conflict which He wages with the numberless hosts of man's enemies, that threaten to overwhelm him, is described. "The Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save." "He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore his arm brought salvation unto him, and his righteousness, it sustained him."<sup>1</sup> Still more definitely in the New Testament we have the declaration of Jesus Christ concerning a judgment which was then executed upon

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah lix., 1, 16.

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the wicked. "I saw Satan," He says, "as lightning fall from heaven." "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out." "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."<sup>1</sup> Elsewhere in the Scripture this judgment is compared to stupendous convulsions of nature,<sup>2</sup> and again to a harvest,<sup>3</sup> and is called in the discourses of Jesus, the "consummation of the age"—unfortunately in our common version mistranslated "end of the world." The Genesis story of the flood evidently represents such a spiritual crisis, as also does the Lord's bringing the children of Israel out of Egypt. From all these things it

<sup>1</sup> Luke x., 18 ; John xii., 31 ; xvi., 33.

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah xiii., 10 ; Joel ii., 10, 30-31. [It is remarkable how literalists have insisted on interpreting these passages according to their material sense when Peter at the day of Pentecost actually referred to this prediction in Joel, and declared that in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on that day, it was at that very time fulfilled—Acts ii., 19, 20] ; Joel iii., 15 ; Matt. xxiv., 29 ; Rev. vi., 12-14.

<sup>3</sup> Joel iii., 13 ; Matt. xviii., 39 ; Rev. xiv., 15.

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may be seen that the doctrine of man's need of a Saviour, and of salvation, is the doctrine of a great crisis in the spiritual affairs of man ; of the presence of the Lord at that crisis, and the execution of a judgment. When from the accumulation of evil in man's spiritual evolution, evil predominates and the possibility of the salvation of the individual is threatened, there is a judgment, and through great spiritual convulsions the conditions in the spiritual world and thence among men, through the continuance of which evil prevails, are changed, and freedom restored. Such upheavals take place in earthly history, as in the French Revolution ; and such a judgment must have taken place at the coming of Jesus Christ,<sup>1</sup> constituting in fact the great redemption which He accomplished.

<sup>1</sup> " I saw Satan as lightning fall from heaven " ;  
" Now is the judgment of this world : now shall  
the prince of this world be cast out." Luke x., 18 ;  
John xii., 31.



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How Jesus Christ is man's Saviour is most livingly displayed before our eyes in the New Testament account of Him, for it is as man's Saviour that He is here especially described. It is not necessary to go back to some Garden of Eden transgression for a ground for man's condemnation, nor to some self-regarding attribute of God for a reason for requiring the act of redemption; but man's spiritual infirmities are the ground of his need of being saved, and his inability to save himself is the reason God must do it. The crucifixion does not in any exclusive sense represent redemption, but through the whole of the divine life which Jesus Christ led on earth were His acts as Redeemer displayed; for every act of His by which any man was saved from any ill, represents the fulfilment of His mission as Saviour. All healing of diseases, the removal of infirmities of any kind, the calming of the troubled sea, the casting out of evil spirits, the raising of the

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dead, the preaching of the Gospel to the poor, and even the endurance of temptation and suffering—all are acts of redemption, for they all are ways in which the infinite power of the Almighty practically extends itself into man's life to save him.

In all these representations it is especially to be noted that man's need of a Saviour is not from God's condemnatory attitude towards him, but from his own spiritual want. The Bible nowhere promises that man shall be saved from the penalties of violated law, nor that he shall be redeemed from the wrath of God. In the Psalms it is declared that Israel is redeemed—not from God's wrath, but "from destruction"; and "from all his iniquities"; and "from our enemies" and "out of the hand of the Egyptians"<sup>1</sup>; and in Luke it is promised that by Jesus Israel should be "saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate

<sup>1</sup> Psalms ciii., 4; cxxx., 8; cxxxvi., 24.

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us.”<sup>1</sup> “Our enemies” and “all that hate us” are not the penalties of a violated law. They can mean nothing less than the very evils themselves of our lives. Man is not saved from God in any sense ; nor from the legal penalty of the violated law, nor from the punishment and suffering which accompany wrong-doing ; nor is his salvation legal and technical. Lusts, passions, worldliness and selfishness, and thence all the wickednesses of his life are the things man needs to be saved from ; and since all these may be summed up as having their origin in the love of self, the supreme thing man needs to be saved from is the love of self and its dominion, that he may be brought into the reception of God and His divine life.

This teaching concerning Christ’s salvation, that it is saving from evil and sin, and not from the punishment due for violated law, is brought out with remarkable clearness and force in the

<sup>1</sup> Luke i., 71.

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words of Jesus to the man sick of the palsy. After saying to him, "Thy sins be forgiven thee," He said to those who questioned His power to forgive sins, "That ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins (he saith to the sick of the palsy), I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch, and go unto thine house."<sup>1</sup> He thus appealed to His power to heal sickness as a proof of His authority to forgive sins, an appeal meaningless under any other supposition than that the forgiveness of sins is the removal of the evils of man's soul by the power of God, as illustrated by His power to remove bodily sicknesses which are the corresponding evils of the body.

The problem of salvation under this interpretation is not indicated by the question, How can God remit the penalty of violated law with due respect to His own edicts? but, How can God be savingly brought into man's life? All

<sup>1</sup> Luke v., 24.

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the acts which Jesus did were accomplished by establishing some kind of connection between Himself and the sufferer; teaching the doctrine that salvation is accomplished by uniting man and God. Man is in the hands of enemies; how can God so get to him as to drive away these evils which beset him? Man is perishing from disease; how can God, as the Great Physician so come near to him as to heal him of this disease of sin? Man is being engulfed in a flood, and is drowning; how can God so reach him as to pluck him out of this inundation of evils and falsities? Such questions as these suggest the kind of salvation man needs, and the way God provides it.

Under the spiritual interpretation of Christ's life, salvation is provided, not by the sacrifice of an innocent victim in the place of the guilty, but by God's use of the Son to effect a practical entrance into man's life for his salvation. We have already seen that the Son is

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the image of God, begotten and born into the life of man. This image is the instrument, the hand, or the body, through which God gets access to man to save him. And God is our Saviour; not the Son as distinguished from the Father, but the Son as the visible instrumentality of the Father.

In adopting this interpretation of the saving acts of Jesus' life we must not forget this first and most essential characteristic, that the finiteness and the limited personality of Jesus, and the local and temporal nature of His acts as related in Gospel story, do not put any limit upon His real greatness, nor upon the greatness of the redemption thus revealed to us. His limitation and the limitation of His doings, and the limitation of the people with whom He associated, are adaptations to the restricted field of our vision. The man Jesus whom our eyes behold, or who is brought before us in New Testament delineation, is a diminished picture of

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the Great Spiritual Jesus, the Mighty Christ, through whom God wrought the salvation of man ; and the individual to whom it is narrated that Jesus brought healing life, should be thought of as representing the race of man, and his being healed as representing a step in the great redemption. It was all humanity that was immersed in evil and obsessed by hell, and it was all humanity that God through the larger Christ, represented by Jesus and His healing acts, liberated from spiritual infirmities, represented by the bodily infirmities of those whom Jesus cured, and thus saved. The simple tales of what Jesus did, thus bring before our eyes, in a form they can receive, a vision of the redemption which the infinite Father, in a humanity taken from man, wrought for the sin-burdened and hell-beset human race.

In apparent opposition to these interpretations it may be well to look at the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, which at the first reading seems to teach the old

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doctrine: "Surely he hath borne our grief and carried our sorrows. . . . He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."<sup>1</sup> But there is a scriptural and thus an authoritative interpretation of this passage strangely ignored by the prevailing schools of exegesis, which demonstrates that this does not teach the doctrine of vicarious atonement. In Matthew it is written, "When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick: that it might be fulfilled that was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses."<sup>2</sup> Observe that this story represents Christ as saving man by casting out devils and healing from sicknesses, thus picturing an actual salvation from

<sup>1</sup> Verses 4, 5.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew viii., 16, 17.



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evil by removing it from man's life, and this is stated to be in fulfilment of this very prophecy in Isaiah which more than any other prophecy has been supposed to teach the old doctrine.

This vision of salvation in which we behold God extending His almighty arm to man to save him from spiritual sickness and death, is the picture of Jesus Christ as our Saviour which we find everywhere in the Scripture when we read it with our minds unfettered with the mediæval ideas of God which conceive of Him as looking out for His own dignity like an earthly monarch, and as enacting laws involving the possibility of technical embarrassments so infinitely serious as to require the death of His Son to enable Him with due respect to Himself to forgive man by not imposing the penalties He had threatened.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The late Bishop Jaynes of the Methodist Episcopal Church, actually called the problem of man's salvation a "governmental embarrassment with God."

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I have been speaking thus far of the salvation of the race, in which God, having come to man in the humanity of Jesus Christ, overthrew the obsessing hells, and established a condition of spiritual freedom and life in which the individual could be kept in a salvable environment. The salvation of the individual is accomplished by his recognition of Christ as the image of God, and thence by the coming of God into his personal life. As to the race, so to the individual, God comes through His Son for the overthrow of the evils which beset him and for his individual salvation.

God's advent into the soul of a man according to the man's conscious and voluntary acknowledgment of Jesus Christ as the "only begotten Son," and thus as "the image of God," is illustrated by the way in which all mental forces effect an entrance into a man's life. These make themselves felt in man's spirit in accordance with the

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images created in his sensories. Thus, how often have men's passions been stirred through music. Saul was saved from the oppression of evil spirits through its influence. It is an instrumentality of recognized force in the management of armies. As expressed in song it has nourished the patriotism of nations, and preserved many lofty sentiments among men. Just what do these statements mean? In its ultimate form music consists of vibrations of the air. These vibrations received into the ear excite certain physical sensations, which under the laws of representation create in man's consciousness an image of some passion, and that image becomes the instrument through which, from the world of mental states, the passion itself enters man and moves him.

The expressions of ideas in books and in spoken language tell the same story. In ultimate form entering men's sensories as vibrations of ether or of

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air, they create in his external consciousness images through which the affections and the thoughts that these images express gain access to his spirit.

It is under this same law operating in the higher regions of man's soul that God works. Jesus Christ is the image of God as presented to man's external conceptions. As man gives this image of God a commanding position in his thoughts and in his affections, by his worship of Jesus Christ, and by his obedience to His commandments, it becomes, under the universal laws for reaching man's spirit, the instrument through which the divine Father Himself enters a man's soul for his salvation.

Why cannot God save a man without the Son? Simply because only through such an instrumentality can He make Himself known, and thus give a man the opportunity to accept or to reject Him—for it is only as man in freedom accepts God that God can save him. It

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is a universal and necessary method for reaching man both in the kingdom of his spiritual and in that of his natural life, that all things out of man reveal themselves to him, and influence him through images begotten in him which are their sons. God is intensely immanent in life; yea, to use Mrs. Browning's words,

"Earth is crammed with heaven,  
And every common bush afire with God."

But notwithstanding this immanence, God does not force himself into man; He "stands at the door and knocks." (Astonishingly significant statement!) And God is admitted by man according to the conception man has of Him, and according to the position of influence he gives that conception in his life. By the images of God which men hold in their thoughts and their affections does He enter their hearts and save them from self, even as by the images in man's sensories are the objects of

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this world made known to him and do they affect his life. Every conception of God which a man cherishes in his heart and out of respect for which he lives according to the laws of neighborly charity, is saving. This salvation varies in degree and in perfection according to the truth of the conception, and according to the quality of the sin-shunning which comes from it. Jesus Christ stands before the individual man as in a supreme degree his Saviour, because in Him he has an utterly matchless revelation of God, having in Him indeed the "only begotten Son" of God, born into the life of man; and in Him also man has an equally matchless revelation of a life of charity.

This interpretation of the coming of Jesus Christ into the world, and of the redemption which is wrought through Him, is not a matter of legalism, nor founded upon a technicality; nor is it a sentimentalism, a matter of "example," a mere instruction in the way of life;

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but it is a mighty salvation, being nothing less than the actual extension of the arm of God into the life of man. It is infinite in its application, operating everywhere, in all times, and in all states of human needs. It accords with universal laws of all nature, being in the spiritual kingdom of life what the mode of sense communication with the world about us is in the natural kingdom of life. Above all, it is real; it is living; it is practical. The infinite Father is right here, instant with His infinite love, wisdom, and power to enter our lives, and bestow Himself upon us, pressing upon us on every side more intensely than the air in which we are immersed, yet with infinite gentleness, only actually making Himself known to us as we permit Him by our worship of Him in His Son. Jesus Christ as our Redeemer, in this understanding of Him, stands always before us as an ever open door of admission to the infinitely saving Power of God.

## VII.

### WE BEHELD HIS GLORY

“And we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”—John i., 14.

HOW can we behold the glory of God? How can we even think of Him whom modern philosophers call the “unknowable” and the “un-thinkable?” We need a description of Him that will meet the demands of our highest intelligence, and at the same time will satisfy our spiritual hungers and thirsts. The presentation of a conception of God that can meet the wants of the spiritual-minded man whose natural intelligence is enlightened by the science and the learning of to-day, is a great need which is pressing upon us.



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To meet this need one class of religious men declare that God must be thought of as a Person. God in the spiritual apprehension of Him, these hold, is a Being of love and wisdom; thus is a Being of life. But love and wisdom, that is, life, as we know them, exist only in persons. Therefore only in person can God be conceived of as a living God; it is only as we think of Him thus that we can place Him before us in distinct form as an object of worship; only in the thought of Him as a Person is possible companionship; only in such thought can our love be moved to its depths, and our wisdom enlightened; and in this form alone can He be our Father. Only in this form can man's hunger and thirst for God be satisfied. He thus presents Himself to us in revelation, and therefore should we always think of God as a Person.

But another class of thinkers, objecting to this, remind us that person, in the only way in which we know person, is

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limited, and that God must be conceived of as without limit. A person must be confined to a certain locality, and to a certain size—things inconceivable with God. The “Big-Man conception of God,” as it has been called, is declared by them to be an absurdity. Our idea of God must be commensurable with His works. Force, they say, which is everywhere at work “making for righteousness”—this is God.

To the spiritual-minded man this latter line of thought is as the blow of death. How can a man with his soul hungering for the tender compassion of God, have that longing satisfied by the conception of a force, or of an atmosphere? How can he be fed by the contemplation of these things operating on a lower plane than the vital forces of his own body, however big and universal they may be? Man’s spiritual hunger can never be satisfied by looking down for God, and recognizing Him as a mighty force impelling him from

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beneath, through the relentless warfare of unremitting evolutionary battle, to rise. Nothing less than finding God above him, stretching His arm down to bless and to save, will meet his needs. Atmospheres, and chemical affinities, the potentialities of atoms, the inherent tendencies of matter, and the wonders of protoplasm, will never, with the spiritual-minded man, take the place of the sweetness of divine love and the satisfactoriness of divine wisdom.

Confronted by these seemingly irreconcilable conceptions, the weight of the argument for each of which must be granted, the problem of uniting them comes home to us. Each of these is right in its way, and each is wrong. A union of them is what we need, and that union we obtain when we think of God in Person, but in infinite Person, that is, in representative Person; and we thus think of God, and thence meet this need by the interpretation of the life of Jesus Christ under the law

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of the parable. The conception of God as being at once a Person and at the same time being above all person, even as boundless as creation itself, a conception combining at once the advantages of both of these conflicting ideas and the disadvantages of neither, is realized when we recognize Jesus as a Parable of the attributes of God. The limitations of the personality with which we in such case invest God are acknowledged in our thought to be derived from ourselves, but the realness, the humanity, and the nearness which by thinking of God as a Person are made features of our conception of Him, are veritable attributes of His, and through this recognition of them by us, is He brought into our life.

Thus conceived of, Jesus Christ satisfies all persons with their every variety of spiritual need. The child, the external man, the man of business, the scientist, the philosopher, and he who is seeking an interior walk with his divine

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Father—each may find in Him an all-satisfying image of God. To each of these He exhibits a face expressing a conception of God adapted to fill the wants of his highest wisdom and his purest affections.

Thus conceived of, He is with each individual the all-in-all to his constantly changing personal states, varying, as they do, from the cradle to the death-bed. He is natural to us when we are natural, and spiritual to us when we need what is spiritual. Thus Jesus, when spiritually understood, is to every one a living image of God, growing with the growth of his spiritual needs, and standing before him forever filling the highest possibilities of his capacity for understanding God. From the most natural state of the religious man to his loftiest spiritual possibilities, Jesus Christ, in this understanding of Him, fills his life.

But unless we use the symbol in the interpretation of Jesus Christ, while He

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may satisfy our childish conception of God, when we become capable of grander realizations of what God must be, we are either held back spiritually to conceptions of Him too limited and too personal, or we find it impossible to unite our ideas of Christ with our ideas of God. How can the "Man of Sorrows" be seen as the "only begotten" of Him who holds the universe in order? If, however, we interpret Him spiritually, the loveliness, the personality, and the humaneness we need in God we find in Jesus Christ, united with the infinities of creation. We have in such case, the tender compassion of the Man—without the limitations of man as we know man; we have the infinitude of creation, with neither its spatial distribution nor its lack of the attributes of the soul.

Yet our apprehension of nature serves our spiritual apprehension of Christ—by giving us an outer image through which we can form a conception of His infinity; for in this conception of Jesus

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Christ, as we have seen, there is involved the doctrine that our consciousness of spiritual things is the demonstration of a spiritual universe, just as the vision of the sky is the witness of a natural universe; that the spiritual is as stupendous as the natural—that is, is infinite; in a word, that there must be a kingdom of life co-extensive with the kingdom of nature, which last is in itself the kingdom of death. For as the kingdom of nature is known to us through the witness of our bodily senses, so, with equal logic and greater certainty, through the witness of our spiritual consciousness, is there made known to us a corresponding kingdom of life. In the kingdom of life all is living. The heat waves which quiver through its atmospheres are from love; the light which illumines it is from wisdom, and all its sights and sounds and feelings are the sense-forms of the states of the soul. It is the pressure of this kingdom of life into nature that produces the living

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forms about us which are wrought from the substances of the earth. The life of nature is the response of material substances to the inflowing of this living kingdom. Evolution is the outer appearance of what is really the effect of the involution of this kingdom of life in the dead kingdom of matter. As man is living in both kingdoms he may recognize in his own personal experiences the presence of both ; and from what he learns of the character of the dead world about him, to whose forces he is now physically, and thus, as to his senses, subject, he may know of the corresponding character of the living world within, to whose forces spiritually, and thus as to the love-life and the thought-life of the soul, he is subject.

Nothing is more gentle, sweet, and personal in its appearance than one's individual consciousness of the greater forces of nature. How delicately the light ministers to the delights of the eye ! How is one to realize, as he re-



ceives the exquisite sensation which a vision of beauty makes upon the eye, that the light from which this impression comes is an emanation of transcendent wonderfulness, which, through the infinite realms of space from ten million of suns in boundless munificence, floods the universe of nature? The sensation in the eye is the impression which this vast efflux makes upon a man's personal consciousness. How gentle the pressure by which one is made aware of his weight as he rests from fatigue! Yet that little physical feeling is his individual experience of gravitation, the stupendous power by which the universe is held in order, and under the control of which the suns and planets pursue their courses. And when one basks in the invigorating sunshine, the genial warmth which brings comfort to his limbs is his personal perception of the sun's heat, that marvellous solar outpouring by which life is made possible on the earth and in the worlds

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about us. While all these things come into our individual lives as sources of personal comfort and happiness, and within the tiniest limitations as to amount and intensity, they are at the same time in themselves so mighty and so universal that they fill all the kingdom of nature with their presence and their power.

If we would have conceptions of spiritual things at all to be compared with our conceptions of natural things, we must recognize these facts of our bodily sensations as representing equally significant truths concerning the things of our spiritual consciousness, which are the sensations of the soul. Personal as the life of our mind appears, its varied forms of consciousness are the ways in which the great forces of the spiritual universe and of God reveal themselves to us. One's intellectual life is his response to the great currents of the kingdom of life which impress the organs of his mind. His affectional life is the

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effect of his sensitiveness to an atmosphere of love as real, as powerful, and as infinite in the realm of the soul, as are the vibrations of heat in the realm of nature. For if we would know God spiritually as we know His works naturally we must recognize this mighty truth,—that the life-forces of the spiritual universe are as much greater than the life realized from the influence of those life-forces in human souls, as the forces of nature are greater than a man's bodily powers. The restriction of our appreciation of the love and wisdom of the kingdom of life to the love and the wisdom which men on earth are conscious of, is as limiting to the conceptions we should have of life as it would be limiting to the conceptions we have of nature to think of the muscular powers which come within our bodily experience as constituting the whole of nature's forces. As all nature is crammed with the mysterious ether through the instrumentality of which life, heat, attrac-

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tion, actinic force, and many undiscovered powers operate to hold the universe in order and conduct it onward in its unfolding to ever greater perfection, so with equal universality of presence and infinitude of extent is the kingdom of man's spirit crammed with the living forces which work for the ever more complete involution of God in the evolution of man. Man's religion, and with the Christian his conception of Jesus Christ, is his personal consciousness of this infinitude of God and of His immanence in the spiritual life of man; and through his worship of Jesus Christ in word and in deed may they be made to come practically into his life for his salvation—that is, for the realization of the life of God in his soul.

The most marvellous and significant feature of the natural fact is the combination of the personality of one's experience with the infinitude of the forces producing it. The infinitude of nature and the limitations of man's conscious-

ness of it do not contradict each other. And equally true is the corresponding spiritual fact that the infinitude of God and the limitation of man's knowledge of Him, that His being greater than all person and yet rightly thought of as a Person, are with due mutual recognition united in the spiritual interpretation of the life of Jesus Christ. As one comes into a grander conception of the Creator from a more perfect knowledge of creation, he is apt to lose some of his consciousness of God's personal nearness. But in this interpretation of Christ's life, both of these essentials of a true conception of God are realized in the soul of man. Jesus Christ is in this understanding of Him more near, more lovely, more sweet, more precious, and a more personal presence of God in the individual life than under the old understanding of Him; while at the same moment we possess a spiritual conception of God as mighty as is the natural conception which the scientist has of

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the forces of nature. These last we appropriate to our bodily comfort with even more personal satisfaction, on account of our knowledge of the infinite abundance of what we in such infinitesimal amounts can make use of. Just as we delight more in sunshine as an object of beauty to the senses and of delight to the body because of our knowledge that its nature baffles the grasp of man's intelligence, and that its marvellous abundance surpasses his imagination; and just as from our scientific apprehension of the heavenly bodies we enter more appreciatively into the enjoyment of the beauty of the sunset, the solemnity of the starlight night and every other of the numberless forms of grandeur and loveliness among the visions of the sky, so correspondingly is our appreciation of Jesus Christ as bringing a personal presence of God to our individual life made greater by interpreting Him as the Parable of God. The per-

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sonal loveliness of His life is not done away with by the truth that within it there is an inconceivably greater spiritual loveliness, surpassing the grasp of our highest intelligence ; rather we enter into an enjoyment of His adaptation to our personal needs with a vastly greater satisfaction on account of our knowledge that every attribute of His which we worship is an adaptation to us of that which, as it exists in Him, is infinitely more lovely than we can see,—yea, than we can understand.

To sum it all in one word : By the symbolic interpretation of the life of Jesus Christ, God as a Person, and God as an infinite and all-pervading Force ; God as a loving Father, interested in the minutest features of my personal welfare, and God incarnating himself during the ages through the evolution of universal man ; God the known and God the unknowable ; God the Saviour of man, and God the Creator of the

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universe ; in a word, God as finited in man, and God the Infinite, are united into ONE.

“ He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.”

“ I and the Father are ONE.”





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